

## **Danville Town Forest    County: Rockingham**

The unique heron rookery in Great Meadow is a beauty unto its own. The 15-stage Nature Trail offers a wide variety of flora and fauna pleasures, including vernal pools and erratics.

Location: 443 Main Street, Route 111A, Danville, NH    County: Rockingham

Delorme Map edition and page: New Hampshire and Vermont (2018), page 84, A-3

GPS location: 42.56614, -71.71184

### **Directions**

From Interstate 93, take exit #3 for Route 111 East through Hampstead to Danville. Turn left on Route 111A and head north for 2.7 miles and turn left at the Hawke Conservation Area, Danville Town Forest sign.

### **Forest Data**

Acreage: 493 acres

Primary Ecosystem Types: Meadow, Freshwater Marsh, Forest in Transition

Trails: Trails provide easy hiking and are well marked in colored blazes. An interpretive nature trail includes description placards and 15 stages identifying local trees.

### **Danville Town Forest Overview and History**

Danville's Town Forest history can be traced back to 1700, when Danville was within the original boundaries of Kingston. The two oldest remaining Town Forest parcels were formally called parsonage lands. They were acquired by deed in 1761 by the Parish of Hawke. Danville's "Parsonage Lots" provide centuries long customs of New England towns that derived income from their forests.

One of the requirements for an independent community were community wood lots which were used to provide housing and heat for the required minister. These parsonage lots in Danville were managed for centuries to raise funds through harvesting and timber auctions and rental of the land for planting and grazing. It was officially designated as a town forest in 2001 by a vote of town meeting.



The Danville Town Forest lies within the Gulf of Maine Coastal Plain, a transitional area between the boreal forest to the north and hardwood forests to the south. It consists of two broad forest types and habitats: Appalachian-Oak Forest and Hemlock-Hardwood-Pine Forest. The Town Forest lands drain into the Exeter River Watershed, which eventually flows east into Great Bay. The Town Forest lands also drain south and encompasses a portion of the Powwow River headwaters, which flows into the Merrimack River.

### Trails, Hiking, and Highlights

From the parking area, head northwest on the Heron Loop to the Sanborn Trail which snakes its way through a mixed woodland of birch, oak, hemlock, and white pine. At Tuckerman Road, turn left and head west to the Heron Loop and follow it to the blue ribbon and marker-blazed Overlook Trail.

At the vernal pool placard, turn right, go past the Split Rock sign, and continue through a beech, birch, and oak woodlot to Split Rock. Explore the boulder field with rock tripe encrusted and moss covered erratics and rocks.



Back at the Overlook Trail, head south and continue through a softwood grove to the Great Meadow viewing area. Partake in the wetlands beauty, scouting for waterfowl. After a delightful respite in the viewing area blind, return back across the bridge, through sweet pepper bush and witchhazel to the Heron Loop. Follow the interpretative signs south and return to a second Great Meadow viewing area, this time at the heron rookery.

Once through the hemlock hollow, sit on the marble bench to marvel at the meadow's majesty. The nature trail will let you meander back to the parking area at your leisure.



The placard indicates that there are more than a dozen species of herons in North America. The Great Blue Heron measures out over 4 feet tall with a wingspan of more than 6 feet. Nesting starts in Spring and continues through Autumn.

### Other Town Forests and Places of Interest Nearby

Danville's Hawke Meetinghouse is located near the Town Forest entrance to Tuckertown Road. The building is on the National Registry of Historic Places and is recognized as the oldest original construction meeting-house in New Hampshire. Just up the road is the Phyllis Massey Stafford Conservation Area and the "Ye Olde Cemetery."

Other local points of interest are:

- Atkinson forest lands and open spaces
- Kingston Town Forest and conservation lands
- West Road Conservation Area (Hampstead).